
Half a Man. The Status of the Negro in New York by Mary White Ovington

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the only sensible way in which such a study as he suggests should be undertaken. Our present unconcern is sufficient evidence—were there no other forthcoming—of the extent to which we share the essential traits of primitive man, viz. a self-satisfied conceit in the ignorance of our own ways and an utter disregard of the bearing of present conditions upon the issues of the future.

Dr. Boas convincingly points out that there is no gulf between primitive peoples and ourselves; that a matter of a few hundred or a few thousand years of arrested development counts for little when viewed from a more comprehensive cosmic standpoint, and that these peoples, while they develop more slowly than do we, may in the end advance farther than we.

The author tells us that we are always measuring other peoples by our own social stand accompanying moral and resultant emotional standards, just as we measure other individuals by our own yard-sticks; other peoples do the same by us; and his inference seems to be that the conclusions of the one race as to the inferiority of another are as true as those of the other races with regard to it. There is no absolute truth as to comparative cultural values. With regard to every phase of the mental life of man, whether that representative be your eminent British philosopher or the fetish-doctor plying his trade in darkest Africa, the author is a thorough-going pragmatist. W. D. WALLIS.

Half a Man. The Status of the Negro in New York. By MARY WHITE OVINGTON. With a Foreword by Dr. Franz Boas of Columbia University, New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1911. Pp. xi, 236.

The eight chapters of this book give the results of an honest and painstaking investigation of the economic and social condition of the Negro in the city of New York, carried on by the author, under the auspices of the Greenwich House Committee, of which she was a Fellow. The first chapter contains a brief history of the Negro in the city, from which it appears that, "before our large foreign immigration, the Negro was more needed in New York than to-day, and received a large share of satisfactory employment." The congestion of a great city has induced

race-segregation, and now the Negroes, like the Jews, the Italians, etc., "have their quarter, in which they live very much by themselves, paying little attention to their white neighbors." The good and bad sides of the Negro districts are clearly in evidence, —San Juan Hill, a characteristic region, has, within the past five years, "taken a decided turn for the better." The author is right in refusing to attribute altogether to lack of physical stamina and inability to resist disease (i.e. to racial defects), the high infant mortality prevalent among the Negroes, for here, as with the whites, improper infant-feeding and other factors must be admitted. The analysis of Negro crime, juvenile as well as adult, likewise fails to respond to the alleged racial touchstone, much of it being undoubtedly local and environmental, and happily curable with time and good-fortune. Depravity and improper guardianship (as revealed by arrests of children) are, apparently, the most serious defects of the New York Negroes.

Race-segregation and race-prejudice (even on the part of the labor-unions), together with his own inefficiency and the lack of opportunity to prove his ability in varied occupations, compel the Negro to work ineffectively in a race-group, instead of laboring effectively as an individual. And in the higher occupational life race-prejudice is even more evilly powerful against him, when he seeks to leave his own little world. More even than the Negro man, the Negro woman needs self-development. For her "full status as a woman" must come. When the Negro does become well-to-do, "he is not permitted to go through the city streets in easy comfort of body or mind." While, on the whole, the municipality does treat the Negro with justice, "the New York citizen can hardly be described as friendly, what catholicity he has being negative." A certain colored clergyman is reported to have said, upon this point: "In Paris I was welcome; in New York I am tolerated." The title of Miss Ovington's book indicates the nature of the opportunities at present afforded the Negro,—some day the democracy of America may decide to let him be a full man by way of the "square deal" and the "equal opportunity." The Negrophobe and the believer in extreme race-segregation should read this book and ponder also the words of Dr. Boas (p. viii): "The Negro of our times carries even more heavily the burden of his racial descent than did the Jew of an earlier period; and the intellectual and moral qualities required to insure success to the Negro are infinitely greater than those demanded from the white, and will be the greater, the stricter the segregation of the Negro community."

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